

EXERCISE 43-3 Choose the correct participle from each pair in parentheses. For help, consult 43f.

EXAMPLE Studying popular myths that turn out to be false can be a (fascinated, fascinating) fascinating experience.

1. While doing research for a paper about birds, I discovered some (interested, interesting) _____ information about ostriches.
2. I encountered an (unsettled, unsettling) _____ passage in a book, which said that ostriches do not, in fact, stick their heads into the sand for protection when they feel fear.
3. This myth about (frightened, frightening) _____ ostriches began among the ancient Arabs and has since been passed on by many reputable writers.
4. In reality, an ostrich does not have to do something as useless as bury its head in the sand when a predator approaches, because a (hunted, hunting) _____ ostrich can reach speeds of nearly 35 mph and can thus outrun most other animals.
5. A (threatened, threatening) _____ ostrich can also kick its way out of many dangerous situations with its powerful legs, and with its 8-foot-tall frame, it presents itself as a (frightened, frightening) _____ opponent.

CHAPTER 44

Modal Auxiliary Verbs

AUXILIARY VERBS are known as *helping verbs* because adding an auxiliary verb to a MAIN VERB helps the main verb convey additional information. The most common auxiliary verbs are forms of *be*, *have*, and *do*. Boxes 8-6 and 8-7 in section 8e list the forms of these three verbs.

MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS are one type of auxiliary verb. They include *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *should*, *had better*, *must*, *will*, *would*, and others discussed in this chapter. Modals differ from *be*, *have*, and *do* used as auxiliary verbs in the specific ways discussed in Box 44-1 on page 522.

44a How do I convey ability, necessity, advisability, possibility, and probability with modals?

Conveying ability

The modal *can* conveys ability now (in the present), and *could* conveys ability before (in the past). These words deliver the meaning “able to.” For the future, use *will be able to*.

We **can** work late tonight. [*Can* conveys present ability.]

I **could** work late last night, too. [*Could* conveys past ability.]

BOX 44-1 SUMMARY




Modals and their differences from other auxiliary verbs

- Modals in the present future are always followed by the SIMPLE FORM of a main verb: *I **might go** tomorrow.*
- One-word modals have no *-s* ending in the THIRD-PERSON SINGULAR: *She **could go** with me; he **could go** with me; they **could go** with me.* (The two-word modal *have to* changes form to agree with its subject: *I **have to leave**; she **has to leave**.*) Auxiliary verbs other than modals usually change form for third-person singular: *I **do** want to go; he **does** want to go.*
- Some modals change form in the past. Others (*should, would, must*, which convey probability, and *ought to*) use *have* + a PAST PARTICIPLE. *I **can do** it becomes I **could do** it in PAST-TENSE CLAUSES about ability. I **could do** it becomes I **could have done** it in clauses about possibility.*
- Modals convey meaning about ability, necessity, advisability, possibility, and other conditions: For example, *I can go* means “I am able to go.” Modals do not describe actual occurrences.

I will be able to work late next Monday. [*Will be able* is the future tense; *will* here is not a modal.]

Adding *not* between a modal and the MAIN VERB makes the CLAUSE negative: *We **cannot** work late tonight; I **could not** work late last night; I **will not be able to** work late next Monday.*



ALERT: You will often see negative forms of modals turned into CONTRACTIONS: *can't, couldn't, won't, wouldn't*, and others. Because contractions are considered informal usage by some instructors, avoid them in ACADEMIC WRITING. 

Conveying necessity

The modals *must* and *have to* convey a need to do something. Both *must* and *have to* are followed by the simple form of the main verb. In the present tense, *have to* changes form to agree with its subject.

You **must** leave before midnight.
She **has to** leave when I leave.

In the past tense, *must* is never used to express necessity. Instead, use *had to*.

PRESENT TENSE	We must study today. We have to study today.
PAST TENSE	We had to [not <i>must</i>] take a test yesterday.

The negative forms of *must* and *have to* also have different meanings. *Must not* conveys that something is forbidden; *do not have to* conveys that something is not necessary.

You **must not** sit there. [Sitting there is forbidden.]

You **do not have to** sit there. [Sitting there is not necessary.]

Conveying advisability or the notion of a good idea

The modals *should* and *ought to* express the idea that doing the action of the main verb is advisable or is a good idea.

You **should** go to class tomorrow morning.

In the past tense, *should* and *ought to* convey regret or knowing something through hindsight. They mean that good advice was not taken.

You **should have** gone to class yesterday.

I **ought to have** called my sister yesterday.

The modal *had better* delivers the meaning of good advice or warning or threat. It does not change form for tense.

You **had better** see the doctor before your cough gets worse.

Need to is often used to express strong advice, too. Its past-tense form is *needed to*.

You **need to** take better care of yourself. You **needed to** listen.

Conveying possibility

The modals *may*, *might*, and *could* can be used to convey an idea of possibility or likelihood.

We **may** become hungry before long.

We **could** eat lunch at the diner next door.

For the past-tense form, use *may*, *might*, and *could*, followed by *have* and the past participle of the main verb.

I **could have studied** French in high school, but I studied Spanish instead.

Conveying probability

In addition to conveying the idea of necessity, the modal *must* can also convey probability or likelihood. It means that a well-informed guess is being made.

Marisa **must** be a talented actress. She has been chosen to play the lead role in the school play.

When *must* conveys probability, the past tense is *must have* plus the past participle of the main verb.

I did not see Boris at the party; he **must have left** early.

EXERCISE 44-1 Fill in each blank with the past-tense modal auxiliary that expresses the meaning given in parentheses. For help, consult 44a.

EXAMPLE I (advisability) should have gone straight to the doctor the instant I felt a cold coming on.

1. Since I (necessity, no choice) _____ work late this past Monday, I could not get to the doctor's office before it closed.
2. I (advisability) _____ fallen asleep after dinner, but I stayed awake for a while instead.
3. Even after I finally got into bed, I (ability) _____ not relax.
4. I (making a guess) _____ not _____ heard the alarm the next morning, because I overslept nearly two hours.
5. When I finally arrived at work, my boss came into my office and said, "Julie, you (necessity) _____ stayed home and rested if you are sick."

44b How do I convey preferences, plans, and past habits with modals?

Conveying preferences

The modal *would rather* expresses a preference. *Would rather*, the PRESENT TENSE, is used with the SIMPLE FORM of the MAIN VERB, and *would rather have*, the PAST TENSE, is used with the PAST PARTICIPLE of the main verb.

We **would rather see** a comedy than a mystery.
Carlos **would rather have stayed** home last night.

Conveying plan or obligation


A form of *be* followed by *supposed to* and the simple form of a main verb delivers a meaning of something planned or of an obligation.

I **was supposed to meet** them at the bus stop.

Conveying past habit

The modals *used to* and *would* express the idea that something happened repeatedly in the past.

I **used to** hate going to the dentist.
I **would** dread every single visit.

 **ALERT:** Both *used to* and *would* can be used to express repeated actions in the past, but *would* cannot be used for a situation that lasted for a period of time in the past.

NO I **would** live in Arizona.

YES I **used to** live in Arizona. 

44c How can I recognize modals in the passive voice?

Modals use the ACTIVE VOICE, as shown in sections 44a and 44b. In the active voice, the subject does the action expressed in the MAIN VERB (see 8n and 8o).

Modals can also use the PASSIVE VOICE (8p). In the passive voice, the doer of the main verb's action is either unexpressed or is expressed as an OBJECT in a PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE starting with the word *by*.

PASSIVE The waterfront **can be seen** from my window.

ACTIVE I **can see** the waterfront from my window.

PASSIVE The tax form **must be signed** by the person who fills it out.

ACTIVE The person who fills out the tax form **must sign** it.

EXERCISE 44-2 Select the correct choice from the words in parentheses and write it in the blank. For help, consult 44a through 44c.

EXAMPLE When I was younger, I (would, used to) used to love to go bicycle riding.

1. You (ought to have, ought have) _____ called yesterday as you had promised you would.
2. Judging by the size of the puddles in the street outside, it (must be rained, must have rained) _____ all night long.
3. Ingrid (must not have, might not have been) _____ as early for the interview as she claims she was.
4. After all the studying he did, Pedro (should have, should have been) _____ less frightened by the exam.
5. I have to go home early today, although I really (cannot, should not) _____ leave before the end of the day because of all the work I have to do.

EXERCISE 44-3 Select the correct choice from the words in parentheses and write it in the blank. For help, consult 44a through 44c.

EXAMPLE We (must have, must) must study this afternoon.

1. Unfortunately, I (should not, cannot) _____ go to the movies with you because I have to take care of my brother tonight.

2. Juan (would have, would have been) _____ nominated class valedictorian if he had not moved to another city.
3. You (ought not have, ought not to have) _____ arrived while the meeting was still in progress.
4. Louise (must be, must have been) _____ sick to miss the party last week.
5. Had you not called in advance, you (may not have, may not have been) _____ aware of the traffic on the expressway.